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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: MAYSAN DA'WA HEAD: WE ARE THE PEACEMAKERS

Classified By: PRT Team Leader Dan Foote for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

(U) This is a PRT maysan reporting cable.

11. (C/REL MCFI) Summary: Latif Abud, the head of the Da'wa party in Maysan and a Provincial Council (PC) leader, painted his party as a major conciliator in an August 26 meeting with the PRT. He expressed cautious satisfaction with improved security since Operation Good Tidings of Peace and emphasized the importance of open-list elections. Latif advocated for additional aid to his "overlooked" province but agreed on the need for the provincial government to better inform its public about U.S. assistance. End Summary.

A nationalist, non-violent party

12. (C/REL MCFI) Latif described Da'wa as the second-strongest political movement in Maysan, after the Sadrists, and led by many of the province's most-experienced and best-educated individuals. He depicted his party as a non-violent movement that seeks to resolve problems through dialogue and a nationalistic message of "a free, multi-sectarian, multi-ethnic Iraq," adding, "Da'wa members belong to Iraq before Da'wa." As evidence, he cited past Da'wa successes in defusing conflicts between the Badr Corps and JAM as well as the Iraqi police and the Sadrists. Latif added that "Da'wa did not retaliate - we sought dialogue," in response to attacks, including two assassination attempts against Latif, the kidnapping of Latif's son, and the burning of three Da'wa offices. He also mentioned his own personal outreach to political, religious, tribal, and civil society elements throughout Maysan in the run-up to Operation Good Tidings of Peace. "We encouraged a peaceful response to the military operations by assuring the provincial government, Sadrists, and tribal leaders that only criminals and insurgents would be targeted, not (the leaders) or their sons, and the result was no fire exchanged."

Security improved, but need elections

13. (C/REL MCFI) Latif lauded the improved environment, including increased freedom of expression, in the wake of Operation Good Tidings of Peace. He explained that, while he previously traveled with twenty bodyguards, he now felt safe with a security contingent of four. Latif emphasized the need to continue to build the Iraqi Army and Police capacity, especially their ability to secure the Iranian border. He concluded that prompt provincial elections were the key to continued advances. He espoused the need for open-list elections so that the best candidates) those focused on a better future for Maysan and its citizens and not on party agendas) could be chosen to govern the province. "Maysanis will choose clean, educated candidates who believe in the right way forward," he said.

More U.S. assistance

14. (C/REL MCFI) While offering thanks and confirming the need

to better inform the populace about U.S. assistance to date, Latif made a passionate case for additional project assistance in improving electricity, modernizing the health-care sector, rejuvenating Maysan's traditional agricultural base, and revitalizing the marshes. He conveyed PC and PRDC frustration over the lack of progress on a number of long-promised U.S. projects. In response, the Team Leader explained that improved security would be a huge step toward kick-starting moribund infrastructure improvements. Latif pledged to promote patience among his colleagues. When presented with details on a number of U.S.-funded projects at various stages, and the total amount of U.S. assistance dedicated to reconstruction in Maysan since 2004, he agreed on the necessity of better public outreach on U.S. support to the province.

Comment: A position of weakness?

15. (C/REL MCFI) Comment: Latif presented the polished, fervent arguments of a seasoned politician capable of selling his message to the masses. The Sadrist majority in Maysan's provincial government will enable Da'wa to run as an opposition party and possibly profit from perceived government failures in service delivery and job creation. Latif's rhetoric aside, Da'wa's past reluctance to retaliate probably reflects its relative weakness in Maysan rather than an underlying commitment to the principles of non-violent conflict resolution. End comment.
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